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Saskatchewan Motorcycle Driver's Handbook

A guide to safe driving

safety

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1. Introduction

Much of the content of this handbook was originally published by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications and has been reprinted with permission.

This handbook is not intended to be a complete digest of rules of the road. It is merely a reference source covering those basic pertinent points related to motorcycle driving that experience has shown to be most important. For the purpose of interpreting and applying the law, the official statutes should be consulted.

2. About this manual

This manual incorporates the newest advances in motorcycling and is designed for novices and experienced drivers alike.

It will provide you with the information, knowledge and skills you'll need to be a safe and knowledgeable rider. You should also have a copy of the *Saskatchewan Driver's Handbook – A guide to safe driving*, and be completely familiar with the information contained in it.

In Saskatchewan, you are required to have a Class 6 driver's licence or an "M" endorsement on your Class 1 - 5 driver's licence to drive a motorcycle on streets and highways. However, there is a restricted learner's licence (Endorsement 6) which permits you to practise your driving on public roads under certain restrictions (see page 56).

This manual contains complete information on preparing to ride your bike, covering such areas as proper clothing, helmet regulations and knowing your motorcycle.

Most collisions involving motorcycles are due to lack of experience. It takes a lot of practice and experience to ride a bike well. You must know where to ride in your lane, how to react to other drivers' mistakes, how to see like an expert and be seen by other motorists, and how to handle dangerous surfaces and emergencies.

To ride well, you must be in good physical and mental condition because handling a motorcycle demands more concentration and is more tiring than driving a car.

Impaired driving is a serious problem, especially among motorcycle drivers. Alcohol seriously affects your mind and body. This is why so many motorcyclists who have been drinking hop on their bikes and end up dead or disabled.

Carrying passengers or cargo is more demanding than riding a bike alone. This manual explains what to watch for when there are two on a bike.

The skills and procedures discussed in this handbook, together with learning experiences on your motorcycle, can help you meet the challenges of operating on our streets and highways. What you learn will add to the pleasure of driving your bike.

3. Preparing to ride

Your chances of getting to your destination in one piece are influenced by the things you do before starting out. Good riders always begin a trip with:

- proper clothing
- a check of the motorcycle
- a test of the motorcycle's operation

Proper clothing

Proper clothing includes:

- an approved helmet
- eye and face protection
- protective clothing

An approved helmet

An approved motorcycle helmet can protect you from serious head injury. When a motorcycle falls, the rider's head often hits something hard, like pavement or a curb.

The human head is fragile and head injuries are often fatal or crippling. Saskatchewan law says that riders and passengers must wear approved helmets and have them properly fastened. A surprising number of motorcyclists killed in accidents were not wearing their helmets. Wear your helmet every time you ride.

A helmet must:

- meet Saskatchewan standards (see page 62)
- have a strong chin strap and fastener
- be free of defects such as cracks, loose padding, frayed straps or exposed metal

A full face or modular helmet is recommended. It's a good idea to have a helmet that is a bright colour such as red, white, yellow or orange. It should also have reflective material on the back and the sides. However, check the manufacturer's specifications before using any adhesive on your helmet.

When selecting a helmet, make sure it fits properly. When you put it on, make sure it is snug and the strap is securely fastened. Studies of motorcycle crashes show that loose helmets are ineffective because they come off in collisions.

Eye and face protection

Your eyes need protection from wind, dust, rain, insects and small pebbles thrown up from vehicles ahead. If the motorcycle is not equipped with a windshield that deflects the airstream away from the driver's face, the operator must wear goggles, safety glasses or a face shield. A face shield is best; it protects your whole face.

Eyeglasses are not made to protect riders. They will shatter if hit by a flying object. If you wear glasses, also use a face shield.

To be effective, eye or face protection must:

- be free of scratches
- be made of material that doesn't shatter
- give a clear view to either side
- fasten securely so that it can't be blown off
- allow some air to pass through so it won't fog
- allow enough room for eyeglasses or sunglasses, if needed

Tinted goggles or face shields should not be worn at night.

Protective Clothing

Clothing can help protect you against injury in case of a fall and is required for proper visibility – wear bright clothing and a vest.

Jacket and pants should cover your arms and legs completely. They should fit snugly enough so they don't flap and yet let you move freely. Wear a jacket even in warm weather. Leather is best. Nylon, vinyl and other sturdy synthetic materials offer some protection against wind and bugs. However, in a crash, synthetic materials will stick to the skin when skidding on grass or pavement.

In cold or wet weather, your clothes should keep you warm and dry, as well as protect you against injury. You can't properly control a motorcycle if you are numb. Riding for long periods in cold weather can cause severe chill and fatigue. A winter jacket should resist wind and fit snugly at the neck, wrists and waist. Rain suits should be of good quality, and be designed for riding. Those that are not designed for motorcyclists may balloon up or tear apart at highway speeds.

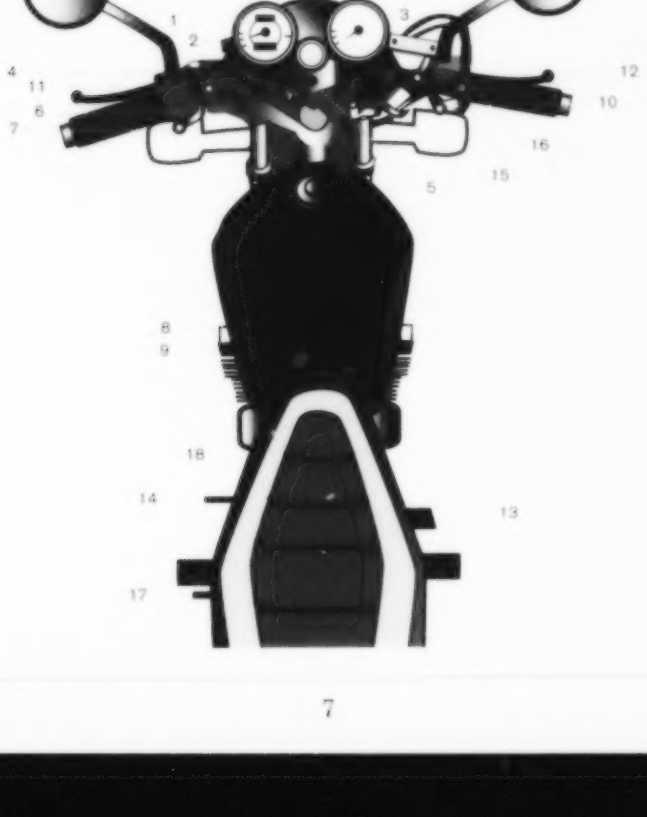
Boots or shoes should be sturdy and high enough to protect the ankles. Soles should be made of hard, durable material. Heels should be low so they don't catch on rough surfaces. Don't wear shoes with rings or loose laces that may catch on controls.

Gloves are also important. They give you a better hold on the handlegrips and controls. Gauntlet gloves are recommended because they provide protection not only to fingers and knuckles, but also to wrists in case of an accident.

Know your motorcycle controls

The beauty of motorcycle design is that all controls and other important devices are within quick reach of the rider's hands and feet. All drivers should know where the controls are and will be tested on their knowledge on the exam. For example, 18 key controls and devices are visible from the saddle of a typical motorcycle:

1. Speedometer and odometer
2. Tripmeter
3. Tachometer
4. Light switches
5. Ignition switch
6. Turn signal switch
7. Horn button
8. Fuel supply valve
9. Choke control
10. Throttle
11. Clutch lever
12. Front brake lever
13. Rear brake pedal
14. Gear selector pedal
15. Starter
16. Engine kill switch
17. Stand
18. Oil level window or dip stick



It is important to become familiar with the motorcycle's controls, whether you're learning to ride or you're an experienced rider driving an unfamiliar motorcycle. In fact, you should first check that the motorcycle isn't too heavy or too large for you to operate comfortably. When sitting on the seat, you should be able to place your feet flat on the ground.

The same controls may not be found in the same places on all motorcycles. Check your owner's manual for the exact location and precise way to operate all controls and devices. The first step in learning to ride a motorcycle is to learn the controls used to operate the machine. You must be able to reach any control without looking for it. With practice, you will be able to operate all controls by reflex. Automatic response is required before you can venture out into traffic.

Instruments

The following instruments are grouped in the centre of the handlebars on most motorcycles:

- The speedometer indicates riding speed in kilometres per hour or miles per hour.
- The odometer indicates total kilometres or miles accumulated on the motorcycle.
- The tripmeter indicates kilometres or miles accumulated since the last time it was set at zero.
- The tachometer indicates engine speed in revolutions per minute (rpm) and shows with a red line the maximum rpm the engine can safely attain.
- The high beam indicator light appears red or blue when the headlight is on high beam.
- The neutral indicator light appears green when the transmission is in neutral.
- The turn signal indicator light flashes amber when either left or right signals are operating.

Ignition switch

The ignition key goes into the ignition switch located near the centre of the handlebars or below one side of the fuel tank. ON and OFF positions are standard. Some switches also have LIGHTS and PARK positions. When the ignition is on, the engine can be started in either the ON or LIGHTS position. The LIGHTS position turns on the headlight and the taillight. The PARK position turns on only the taillight. The key can be removed only in the OFF or PARK position.

Light switches

If the ignition switch does not have a LIGHTS position, your motorcycle will have a separate switch with which to turn on the headlight and taillight. On all newer motorcycles, the headlight and taillight come on automatically when the ignition is switched on and the engine is running.

A dimmer switch, generally located on the left handlebar and operated by the left thumb, can be used to set the headlight on low or high beam.

Turn signal switch

The switch to control turn signals is usually located on the left handlebar and is controlled with the left thumb. Move the switch right to 'R' to flash the right turn signal lights. Move it left to 'L' to flash the left signal lights.

Most motorcycle turn signals do not self-cancel after a turn, as an automobile's do. So, you must cancel the signal after each turn or lane change. Failure to cancel a turn signal is as dangerous as not signalling in the first place.

Brakelight

The brakelight is located on the rear fender and is activated when either the front or rear brake is applied.

Horn button

Sound the horn by pushing the horn button located on the left handlebar with your left thumb.

Fuel supply valve

The fuel supply valve is a petcock located below the fuel tank. It controls the flow of gasoline to the engine. When the motorcycle is not in use, the valve should always be turned to the OFF position to eliminate the possibility of fuel leaking into the crankcases or creating a fire hazard.

The valve must be turned to the ON position on many bikes for fuel to flow to the engine and for it to start and run. The fuel tank has a reserve section in case the main section runs dry. To release the reserve supply, you must turn the valve to RESERVE or RES, something which you should be able to do while you are riding your motorcycle.

Choke control

The choke adjusts the mixture of gasoline and air supplied to the engine and usually is used only when starting a cold engine. The choke control is located on the engine or at the handlebars. To start a cold engine, move the choke control to the ON position and start the motorcycle. When the engine is warm, return the choke control to the OFF position.

Throttle

The right handlegrip is the throttle that controls the flow of gasoline to the engine and thus the speed of the engine and, ultimately, the speed of the motorcycle. To increase speed, rotate the throttle toward you with your right hand. To reduce speed, twist the throttle away from you. The throttle must spring back to the idle position if you remove your hand.

Clutch lever

The clutch lever is located in front of the left handlebar and is operated when squeezed toward the handlegrip with the fingers of the left hand. Squeezing the lever disengages the clutch and disconnects the engine power from the rear wheel. Releasing the lever engages the clutch and provides power to the rear wheel. Whenever you change gears, either up or down, you must first disengage the clutch.

Front brake lever

Apply the front wheel brake by squeezing the lever on the right handlebar toward the handlegrip with the fingers of your right hand.

Rear brake pedal

Activate the rear wheel brake by pressing your right foot on the pedal located in front of the right footrest (on most bikes). Remember that the right hand controls the front brake while the right foot controls the rear brake. They should be used together. The engine of your motorcycle will also act as a brake when you gear down or reduce throttle.

Gear shift

The gear selector pedal is located on the left side on most motorcycles just ahead of the footrest. You shift gears by lifting or depressing the pedal with your left toe.

Most motorcycles have four or five gears and a neutral position. In neutral, the transmission is out of gear and power will not reach the rear wheel.

The gear selector pedal should only be operated while the clutch is disengaged. After you have squeezed the clutch lever with your left hand, you can select the gear you need by lifting or depressing the gear selector pedal with your left toe.

Starter

Most motorcycles have an electric starter operated by pushing the starter button on the right handlebar.

Many bikes still have a kick starter, usually located above the right footrest. It must be unfolded before it can be used to start the motorcycle with a vigorous kick.

Engine-kill switch

The engine-kill switch is located on the right handlebar and is usually red. It is used in an emergency to stop the engine quickly. It may also be used to turn off the engine after a normal stop, but be sure to turn off the ignition switch as well after using the kill switch.

The engine will not start when the kill switch is in the OFF position.

Stands

When motorcycles are parked, they are supported by either a side stand or a centre stand. Some models may have both.

A side stand extends downward from its position underneath the motorcycle to support the motorcycle in a leaned position.

A centre stand is a sturdy, two-legged stand attached underneath the centre of the motorcycle frame. It can support the motorcycle in an upright position.

Stands are held in their retracted position by spring mechanisms and lowered for use by the rider's foot.

Make sure your side stand is retracted before you start off.

Daily motorcycle check

With a little experience, you will become familiar with the motorcycle controls. If there's anything wrong with the motorcycle, the time to find out about it is before you are in traffic.

Here are the things you should check before every ride. Take a look at the critical parts of your bike before starting out.

Tires

You have only two tires so you must keep them in good condition. Check for:

a) **Inflation**
The motorcycle does not handle properly if the air pressure is too low or too high. Check the owner's manual for the right amount of air.

b) **Tread**
Worn or uneven tread can make the motorcycle skid, particularly on wet pavement. Once the centre wear bar is exposed, you have only 1 mm of tread left. The tire must be replaced.

c) **Damage**
Check for cuts or nails stuck in the tread. Also, check the sidewalls for cracks. A blowout on a motorcycle can be extremely dangerous.

Controls

The controls are mounted on the handlebars. Make sure your controls work before you start out.

Brakes

Try the front and rear brakes one at a time. Make sure each one holds the motorcycle when it is fully applied.

Clutch and throttle

Make sure the controls work smoothly. The throttle should snap back when you let go.

Cables

Check the cables for kinks or broken strands. If a cable breaks while you are riding, it could cause a crash.

Lights
Don't put your faith in lights that may not work. Keep them clean and check them regularly.

Turn signals
Check all four turn signal lights. Make sure they flash when they are turned on and are bright enough to be seen.

Headlight
Check your headlight. In daytime, pass your hand in front of the beam to make sure the headlight is really on. Try your dimmer switch to make sure both high and low beams work.

Tail and brakelight
Try each of your brake controls and make sure that each one activates your brakelight.

Horn
Try the horn to be sure it will work if you need it!

Gas and oil
Check gas and oil levels before you start. Running out of gas is inconvenient, and can also be dangerous if it happens where you cannot get off the road quickly. You can check the oil through the oil level window or on your dip stick.

Lack of oil can cause your engine to **seize**. This could lock the rear wheel and make you lose control.

Mirrors
Clean and adjust both mirrors before you start. It is difficult – and dangerous – to ride with one hand while you adjust a mirror.

Swing your mirrors out far enough to see around your body. Adjust each mirror to show half the lane behind you and as much as possible of the lane beside you.

4. Precision – Learning to control a motorcycle like an expert

To control a motorcycle with precision, you have to be able to make it go exactly where you want and at the right speed.

When you're learning to ride, it's important to develop proper riding techniques right from the start. However, only a lot of practice will ensure that you are able to control steering, throttle and brakes precisely.

Body position

To control a motorcycle well, your body must be in the proper position.

Seat

Sit close enough to the handlebars to reach them with your arms slightly bent. Bending your arms allows you to turn the handlebars without having to stretch.

Posture

Your body should be fairly erect. This lets you use your arms to steer the motorcycle rather than to hold yourself up.

Hands

Hold the handgrips firmly so that you will not lose your grip if the motorcycle bounces. Start with your wrists down. This will prevent you from accidentally using too much throttle.

Knees

Hold your knees firmly against the gas tank. This will help you keep your balance as the motorcycle turns.

Feet

Keep your feet firmly on the footrests. A firm footing is important to help you maintain balance. Don't drag your foot or walk the bike when starting. If your foot catches on something, you could lose control of the motorcycle.

Keep your feet near the controls. This lets you use the controls quickly if you have to. Also, try to keep your toes up. If you let them drop, they may get caught between the road and the footrest.

Turning

The secret to smooth and successful cornering lies in proper head turns and keeping your eyes up. Where you look is where you go. If you look through the turn you'll ride through the turn. If you look out of the turn, you'll ride out of the turn. Remind yourself to look ahead. Turn your head to face all the way through corners. This gives you the essential information to negotiate turns safely and skillfully.

There are four basic steps to turning a motorcycle:

1. Slow

Reduce speed before the turn. Close the throttle and/or apply the brakes as necessary. Downshifting can also help reduce speed if necessary. Slow enough before the turn to allow smooth and constant throttle roll-on through the turn.

2. Look

Turn your head and look as far as possible through the turn. Keep your head facing your intended path of travel. Keep your eyes level with the horizon. Use your peripheral vision to search the immediate area.

3. Roll

As you approach the entrance to the curve and before you lean, gradually roll on the throttle. Maintaining steady speed or gentle acceleration stabilizes the suspension and improves overall control. Avoid abrupt acceleration while turning.

4. Press

Lean the motorcycle into the turn by applying gentle, forward pressure to the handgrip in the direction of the turn. To turn right, press on the right handgrip. To turn left, press on the left handgrip. While this may sound backwards, the technique, known as countersteering, really works. A motorcycle must lean in order to turn. The pressure on the handgrip (countersteering) causes it to lean in the direction of the turn.

Rider countersteers.

Front wheel momentarily outtracks away from turn, causing motorcyle to being leaning in turn direction.

Motorcycle stabilizes in turn, front wheel re-centres.

Braking

Your motorcycle has two brakes. You need both of them to stop effectively. The front brake provides about three-quarters of your stopping power. Use both front and rear brakes in combination to provide good control.

Here are some things to remember about braking:

a) Use both brakes every time you slow down or stop. If you use the rear brake for normal stops, you may not have enough skill to use the front brake properly when you really need it.

b) Apply both brakes at the same time using a progressive squeeze.

c) Make sure all your braking is done prior to the turn.

Shifting gears

There is more to shifting gears than simply getting the motorcycle to accelerate smoothly. Sloppy shifting can cause crashes when downshifting, turning or starting on hills.

The purpose of the gears in a motorcycle transmission is to match the engine's speed (measured by the tachometer) with the motorcycle's road speed (measured by the speedometer in km/h or mph).

On most bikes, neutral is located between first and second gear. Always start and shut off your bike in neutral.

When starting off from a standstill, you must shift the transmission up through the gears so that the engine is able to maintain the motorcycle's road speed without turning too fast. Your motorcycle owner's manual has information on the range of engine speeds at which the motorcycle was designed to be operated. The proper gear will also permit the engine to provide sufficient power for the bike to accelerate if necessary.

When slowing down in traffic, or for road conditions, you must shift down through the gears until an appropriate match is obtained between engine and road speed. Remember to shift up when the engine is turning too fast for the road speed and to shift down when the engine is turning too slowly.

Shifting down is more difficult to do smoothly than shifting up – and potentially more dangerous. You must open the throttle slightly to increase engine speed as you shift down with the clutch pulled in. If you don't apply enough throttle, the bike will lurch when you release the clutch. Shifting down without having the

engine speed up enough to match its speed with the motorcycle's speed may cause the rear wheel to skid.

Shifting in a turn

If downshifting is required, ensure it is done prior to the turn. Do not upshift in a turn unless you can do it very smoothly. A sudden change in power to the rear wheel can cause it to lock or lose traction. The result can be a skid. It is best to change gears before entering a turn.

Starting on a hill

It is more difficult to get the motorcycle moving on an upgrade than it is on flat ground. There is always a danger of rolling backward into someone behind you.

Here is what you have to do:

1. Use the front brake to hold the motorcycle while you start the engine and shift into first gear.
2. Change to the foot brake to hold the cycle while you operate the throttle with your right hand.
3. Open the throttle a little bit for more power.
4. Release the clutch gradually. If you release it too quickly, the front wheel may come off the ground or the engine may stop – or both.
5. Release the foot brake when the engine begins to take hold.

5. Perception and prediction

Expert riders know what's going on around them and act early, responding to potential problems before they become life threatening. Become an expert rider by developing expert judgment. SIPDE is the acronym for a mental strategy used to make sound judgments and reduce risks in traffic. It stands for:

Scan

Search aggressively ahead, behind and to the sides for potential hazards. What you don't detect can hurt you! Scan aggressively to recognize problems before they become critical. Keep your eyes moving in a purposeful search for information.

Identify

An aggressive search will allow you to identify hazards and potential conflicts early. Hazards fall into the following three categories:

1. Other vehicles – traffic sharing the road with you. Your reactions to other vehicles are critical.

2. Pedestrians and animals – they move unpredictably and, depending on their size, can create an imposing hazard.

3. Fixed hazards – stationary objects near and alongside the roadway, surface hazards, signs and signals, guardrails, bridges, etc. They don't move, but failing to recognize them can be hazardous.

Predict

Once you've identified the hazard, the next step is to quickly predict what it will do. How critical is the situation? What are your options? What are the consequences? Will the hazards separate or is action required? Is collision imminent? This is the "what if" phase of SIPDE that depends upon your knowledge, experience and skill. An agressive search has presented you with critical information – be prepared to act on it!

Decide

The next step calls for decisions based upon your prediction. Complete the "what if" phase to estimate results. What are you going to do, and how are you going to do it? In any situation, you have three choices:

1. Adjust speed – speed up, slow down or stop.

2. Adjust position – move left or right.

3. Communicate – sound your horn, flash your brake light or headlights, signal, etc.

Execute

Act on your decision. This is the physical part of the SIPDE process. Now is the time to apply your skills:

1. Adjust speed – roll on or off throttle, brake or downshift for greater acceleration.

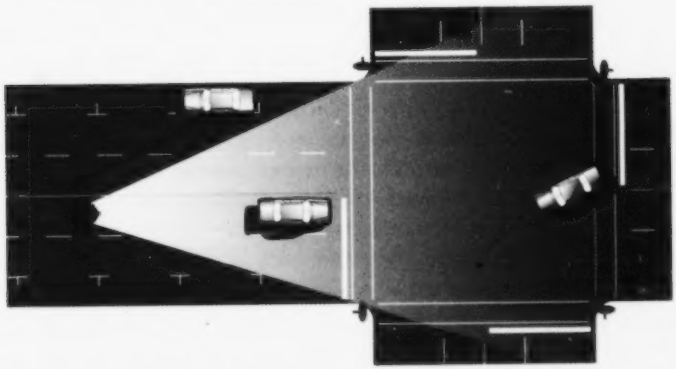
2. Adjust position – press left or right.

3. Communicate – press the horn button, flash the lights, etc.

Learning good perception

The best way to stay out of trouble is to see it coming. Expert riders have very few surprises on the road because they see and understand possible problems before getting to them.

To have such good perception, experts have learned to look far ahead. In the city, expert riders always look from one and a half to two blocks ahead. On the highway, they look as far ahead as they can see. Looking well ahead gives them plenty of time to adjust to problems. It also helps them avoid panic stops or sudden swerves that can cause even more trouble. (For more information, see the *Saskatchewan Driver's Handbook.*)



Your visibility of traffic and road conditions ahead is better if you do not follow the vehicle ahead too closely.

To develop expert rider perception:

1. **Look ahead** as far as you can see.

2. Keep your **eyes moving**. Don't look at one place for more than two seconds; trouble could be developing in one place while you're staring at another.

3. Use your height advantage. Look over or through the car in front of you for cars stopping or turning ahead.

4. Check the roadside. Watch for cars that may leave the curb or enter from side streets or driveways.

Sometimes you cannot see an area because your view is blocked by a bridge or a truck. Good riders have good imaginations. Ask yourself what **might** be there that you can't see yet. What you can't see can hurt you.

Checking the road surface

Road conditions and surfaces cause more trouble for motorcycles than other vehicles. When looking ahead and scanning the road, good riders always look for problem spots on the surface. They learn to see these spots well ahead, so they don't have to look down at the road surface.

Follow these tips:

- Keep checking the road surface ahead for slippery spots, bad bumps, broken pavement, loose gravel, metal plates, polished pavement, wet leaves or objects lying on the road.
- When riding in winter conditions, be alert for ice or snow patches on the road.
- Use caution on pavement markings since they are slippery.

Using mirrors

Traffic behind is almost as important to the motorcycle rider as traffic ahead. Good riders check their mirrors every few seconds to keep track of traffic coming from behind. You should have a good picture in your mind of what is back there so you won't be caught off guard when somebody passes you, and so you can safely and quickly stop or swerve if an emergency develops up front.

Mirror checks are especially important in these situations:

a) When you have to slow down or stop suddenly. There may be someone behind you.

b) When you are stopped at an intersection.

In both situations, if the driver behind you isn't paying attention, he or she could be right on top of you before he or she notices you are there. You have to be prepared to get out of the way.

c) Any time you turn. Watch cars behind you, especially if you plan to slow down and turn where others may not expect it, such as into alleys, driveways and side streets.

Again, the driver behind you may not see you or may not slow down. It may be better to not turn, and to continue on.

d) Any time you change lanes. Make sure no one is about to pass you.

Many motorcycles have convex mirrors. They give a wider view of the road behind them than flat mirrors. However, they also make cars seem farther away than they really are. If you are not used to convex mirrors, try this: while you are stopped, pick out a parked car in your mirror. Try to form a mental image of how far away it is. Then turn around and look at it. See how close you came. Practise this until you become a good judge of distance. Even then, allow extra distance before you change lanes.

Shoulder check

Remember, mirrors don't give you the whole traffic picture, so always make a final shoulder check by turning your head in the direction you plan to move before you change lanes or move within your lane.

Learning to predict

Traffic laws and rules of driving courtesy tell what you and other drivers are supposed to do in any situation. A motorcyclist could just ride along assuming that other drivers will always obey the rules. This kind of prediction is certain to get the rider seriously injured.

Good riders are always asking themselves what other drivers are **really** going to do, not what they are **supposed** to do.

In order to predict what other drivers will do, the rider has to think about three things:

1. What does the other driver want to do?

2. Am I in the way?

3. Does the other driver see me?

The other drivers on the road want to get where they're going without delay. They will do whatever is necessary to keep moving. For instance, if a driver's lane is

blocked by a stalled car, the motorist will want to change lanes to keep moving. If the driver is stopped at a stop sign, he or she will want to pull out as soon as possible. To predict what the driver is **actually going to do**, you have to put yourself in the other driver's position.

Drivers of cars involved in collisions with motorcycles often say they didn't see the motorcycle soon enough to avoid the collision.

A motorcycle can be difficult to see. From ahead or behind, its outline is much smaller than a car's. Motorcycles that aren't seen are often hit. If a driver does not see you, he or she may pull out or turn in front of you, or cut you off.

Even if the driver does see you, you might be hit if he or she:

- misjudges your speed
- is impaired
- is unconcerned about your well-being

Only the motorcycle rider can make the motorcycle more noticeable. There are a number of things you can do to stand out.

Headlight

Most motorcycles have headlights which come on automatically. If your bike does not, turn on the headlight when riding. This improves your chance of being seen by other drivers. One study showed that motorcycles are seen one and a half times better when the headlight is turned on during the day than when it's not.

The headlight helps, but it's not the whole answer to the daytime motorcycle visibility problem. The headlight is most visible from straight ahead of the motorcycle. From an angle, it doesn't look very bright and can't help much. From the side and rear, of course, it has no effect at all. Taillights aren't bright enough to help much during the day, either.

Clothing

Light, bright-coloured clothing and a helmet make you more visible during the day, especially from angles where the headlight can't help. Yellow, orange, red and other bright colours are highly visible; black and dark colours are not.

Be visible – wear bright-coloured clothes and helmet.

Nighttime visibility

At night you depend mostly on your lights to make you visible to other drivers. This works well most of the time, but not always. If you're riding alone on a dark road, your headlight will be visible to a driver ahead. But if you are in traffic with other headlights behind you, a driver ahead may not be able to pick your single light out of all the lights behind. This problem is especially bad when the roads are wet, because the lights reflect off the road surface.

If you're ahead of a group of cars at night, slow down. Other drivers are even more likely than usual to turn in front of you.

Taillight and side reflectors improve nighttime visibility to the sides and rear. But again, a single taillight can get lost against the background of other lights. It can be hard for drivers to tell how far away the light is, even if they see it. You can help by adding reflectors or reflective tape to the rear of the bike, or by wearing a jacket with reflective material on it.

Horn

The horn on most motorcycles is not much of an attention-getter. Nevertheless, be ready to use it whenever you're passing a car, or approaching a driveway or intersection with a vehicle in it that might pull out in front of you. It's also a good idea to use your horn before you pass anyone you think might move into your lane.

Here are some situations to watch for:

- a driver accelerating in the lane next to you
- a driver sitting in a parked car
- a person walking or riding a bicycle in the street

Don't be afraid to use your horn if you have any doubts about what others might do.

Signalling

Turn signals do two things. First, they tell others what you plan to do. Use them any time you change lanes, whether someone else is around or not. Remember, it's when you don't see the vehicle that your signals are most important.

Second, your signal lights make you more visible. A driver behind you is more likely to see your turn signal than your taillight. Therefore, make it a habit to use your turn signals even when what you plan to do is obvious. For example, if you

use your turn signals on a freeway entrance ramp, it's more likely that cars on the freeway will see you and make room for you. Using hand signals in addition to electronic signals greatly increases your visibility.

Caution

Forgetting to turn a signal off is as dangerous as forgetting to turn it on. A driver may think you plan to turn and pull right into your path. Always check your instrument panel to see if you've left a signal on.

If you have an old motorcycle without turn signals, use hand signals. For more information, see the *Saskatchewan Driver's Handbook*.

Brake light

You can help others notice you by tapping the brake pedal lightly to flash your brake light before you slow down. It's important to flash your brake light as a signal that you're going to slow down when you're:

- being closely followed
- making a tight turn off a high-speed highway
- slowing or turning in the middle of a block, at an alley or at some place where others might not expect you to turn

When you park, angle the motorcycle at a 45 degree angle and 15 cm from the curb. This gives you better visibility when pulling out, and other drivers on the street can see your parked motorcycle and won't start to pull into the parking space. Also, the driver of the car parked ahead of you is more likely to see your motorcycle in the rearview mirror before backing up.

Left turn in front of motorcycle

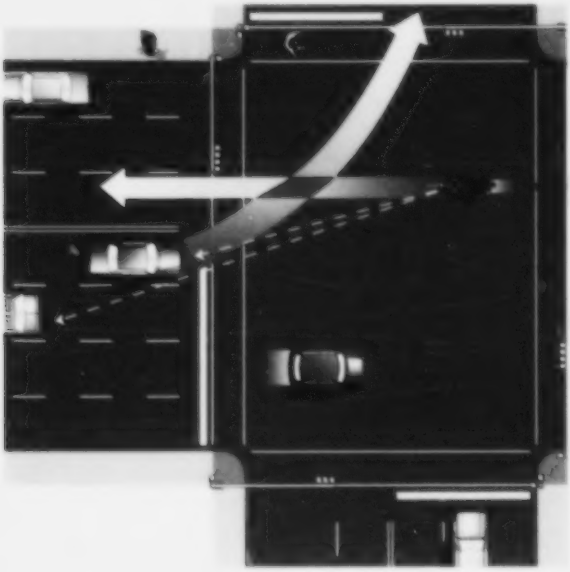
The most common cause of motorcycle/car collisions is the car turning left in front of the motorcycle. The car driver either doesn't see the motorcycle or misjudges its speed. The motorcycle rider may not be completely innocent in this situation if the motorcycle is going faster than the driver would expect. When you approach an intersection with a car waiting to turn left:

1. Prepare to reduce speed and be ready to brake.

2. Get ready to blow the horn.

3. Think about what you'll do if the car turns in front of you. Where will you go? Is there a clear area to swerve? How fast will your bike stop on that pavement?

4. Don't let your mind focus too long on the left-turning vehicle. Is there something else in the intersection that could cause trouble too, like another car or a pedestrian?

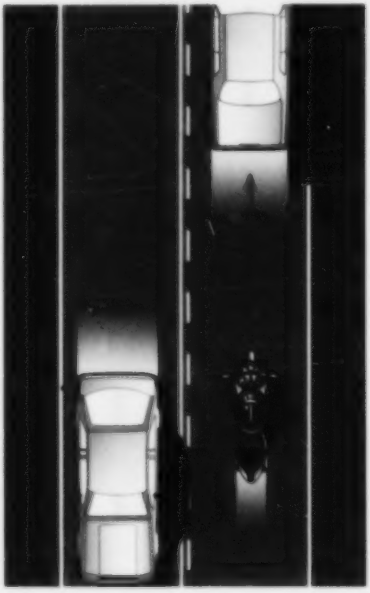


6. Position – Learning your place on the road

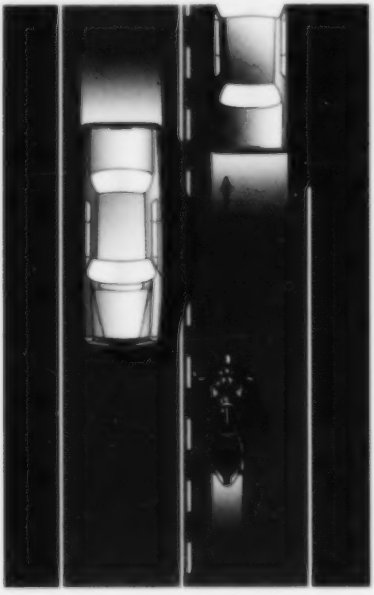
Motorcyclists don't have the protection around them that other drivers have, so they have to make their own protection.

Lane position – blocking

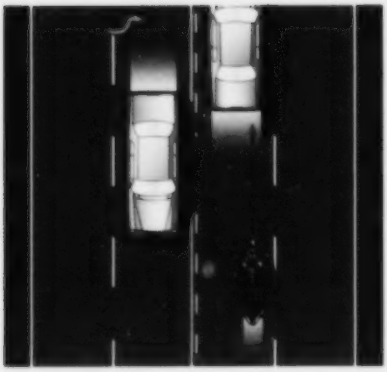
A motorcycle rider has some choice of where to ride in the lane. The best choice is the **blocking position**, a little to one side of the centre of the lane. The blocking position discourages other drivers from trying to squeeze past the same lane as the motorcycle.



Position 1 – WRONG
The centre of the lane does not provide visibility around the vehicle ahead of you. It is coated with oil thrown from cars and is slippery when wet.



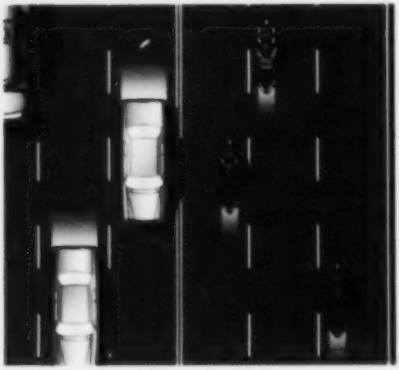
Position 2 – CORRECT
When travelling the curb lane or next to a parking lane, a motorcycle driver should be slightly to the left of the centre of the lane. This is your blocking position and protects you in case a driver opens the door of a parked car.



Position 3

On multi-lane streets with or without boulevards

By travelling in this position – just slightly to the **right** of the centre of the lane – you're in a blocking position, the proper riding position.



Position 4

Centre lane

When driving on a **road** with three or more lanes, always ride left of centre unless you are in the extreme left lane, in which case you should ride right of centre.

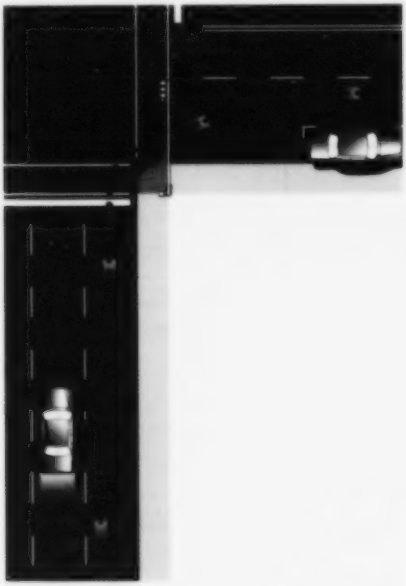
Turning position

Good riders are careful to maintain the proper blocking position when they turn.

Position 5

Making a proper right turn (when lane opens up at intersection)

It's more complicated when approaching an intersection where the lane opens up. Because the stop line is further out, you must move over from your normal blocking position in the curb lane to prevent a car from coming up on the inside on the wider part of the road. Make a shoulder check; move over to the right about 1.2 m from the edge of the roadway; make your right turn and then make another shoulder check and move back to the proper blocking position – to the left of the centre of the lane.



Position 5A

Making a proper right turn (no change in lane size at intersection)

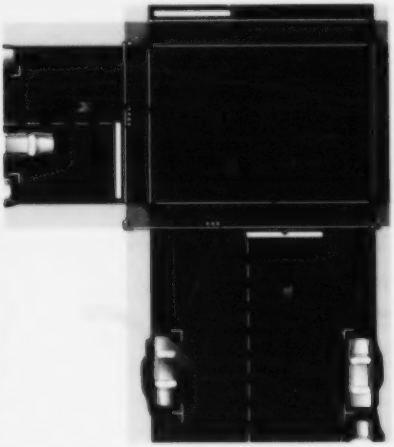
When approaching an intersection where the right lane remains the same size, position your motorcycle near the centre of the right lane, make your right turn into the first available driving lane, then shoulder check and move back to the proper blocking position to the left of the centre of the lane.

Making a proper left turn

In the left lane make your turn while keeping the blocking position throughout your turn.

Position 6

Proper position for multi-lane streets



Position 6A

Proper position for single-lane streets

The best protection a rider can have is distance – distance between the rider and other people's mistakes. Keeping plenty of space around you gives you two things:

- time to react to trouble
- some place to go

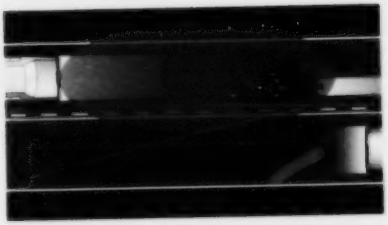
Gates

You should maintain **gates** around you and keep your defensive eye alert for all other traffic:

- ahead of you
- behind you
- approaching you
- approaching from the side
- you are passing
- passing you

(See the *Saskatchewan Driver's Handbook* for an explanation of gates.)

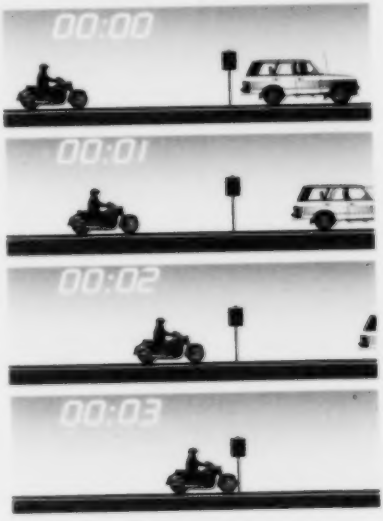
Distance in front



Good riders keep at least a three-second distance between themselves and the vehicle ahead. This gives them plenty of time to react if something happens ahead. It also gives a better view of things in the road, such as potholes, slippery spots, chunks of tire tread or debris. If conditions are less than ideal, such as in bad weather, maintain an even greater following distance.

Three-second rule

For proper following distance, use the three-second rule.



1. The car ahead is approaching a check point (a power pole, road sign, etc.).
2. Begin counting as the rear of the car ahead passes the check point.
3. If it takes less than three seconds to reach the check point, you're too close.
4. Three seconds (one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three) is correct for ideal conditions. Allow more space in poor conditions.

Keep well behind the vehicle ahead even when you are stopped. This will make it easier to get out of the way if someone bears down on you from behind.

Distance to the side

Motorcycle riders can do one thing other drivers cannot -- they can move across the lane to increase their distance from other vehicles. An experienced rider changes position in the lane as traffic conditions change.

Vehicles alongside

Don't ride beside other vehicles if there is no need. A vehicle in the next lane could change into your lane at any time without warning. Vehicles in the next lane also block your escape if you run into danger in your own lane. Speed up or drop back until you find a place that is clear on both sides.

Here are some of the conditions that require changes in lane position:

Passing vehicles

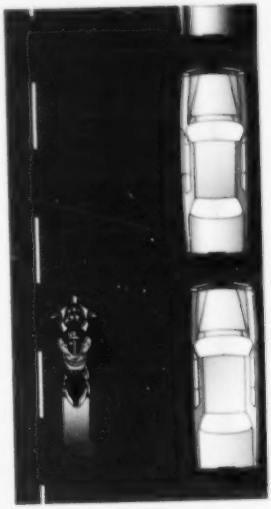
When you're being passed from behind or by an oncoming vehicle, move a little toward the centre of the lane. There's no point in being any closer to a passing vehicle than you have to be. A slight mistake by either driver could cause a sideswipe. Moving towards the centre of the lane also helps to keep you out of the way of extended mirrors, things thrown from windows or kicked up from the tires of other vehicles.

Give way to large trucks. They can create air turbulence that affects your control. You have more room for error if you move away from the truck.

Parked cars

When passing parked cars, the motorcycle rider has an advantage over the automobile driver. By staying in the left portion of the lane, you can avoid the problems caused by doors opening, drivers getting out of cars or people stepping from between cars.

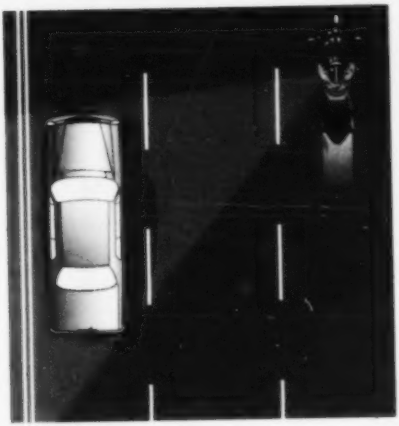
A bigger problem is cars pulling out. Drivers often take a quick look behind them and fail to see a motorcycle. Cars making U-turns are a particular danger. Suddenly the car turns across the road and blocks the lane, leaving the motorcyclist with no place to go. If you see a car pulling out, approach very cautiously.



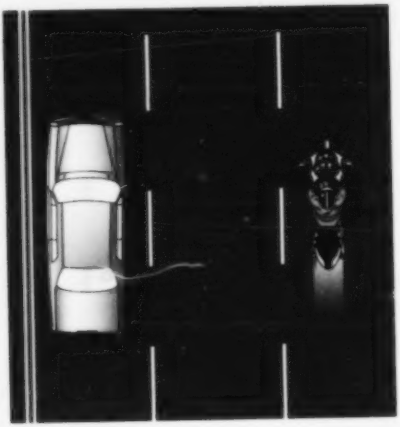
Lane changes

Weaving in and out of heavy traffic is a sure sign of a careless rider.

When you have to change lanes or change position in a lane, make sure there's no overtaking traffic. **When it is safe, look, then signal and look again before changing lanes.**



Turn your head and make a shoulder check. That's the only sure way to see a vehicle behind you in the next lane, so it's particularly important. There's very little chance a driver in the next lane can react quickly enough to avoid you once you've started to move.



On a roadway with several lanes, check the far lanes as well as the one next to you. Another driver may be headed for the same space you are.

Sharing lanes

Motorcyclists are allowed to ride two abreast, but most riders prefer to have a full lane width. Motorcycle drivers shouldn't share lanes with cars. The best way to stop lane sharing is to keep your blocking position, especially in situations where other drivers might be tempted to squeeze by you.

Pay close attention when:

- You're in heavy bumper to bumper traffic.
- You're preparing to turn at an intersection, entering an exit lane or leaving the highway.

- Another driver wants to pass you. If you move to the far side of the lane in these situations, you invite the driver to share the lane with you.
- Overtaking a car in your lane. Pass in the same manner as if you were driving an automobile.

Lane splitting

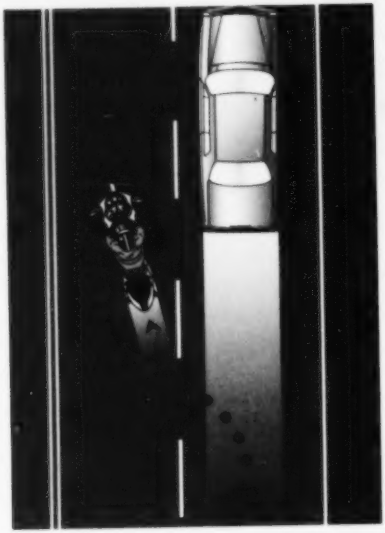
Don't do it! In heavy traffic, some riders try lane splitting (riding on the line between lanes of traffic). This is a very bad idea. It puts the bike too close to other vehicles, and other drivers aren't expecting the motorcycle to be there. Just a small movement – a car starting a lane change or a door opening – can cause an unavoidable crash. There's just no place to go.

Aside from the danger to the rider who does it, lane splitting causes trouble for all motorcycle riders. It is an irresponsible act that makes other motorists lose respect for motorcycle riders. In these situations it is best to stay in the lane and move at the speed of other traffic.

Distance behind

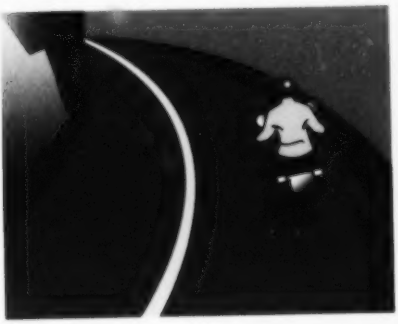
Many riders complain about tailgaters (people who follow others very closely). If someone is following you too closely, change lanes and let the tailgater pass.

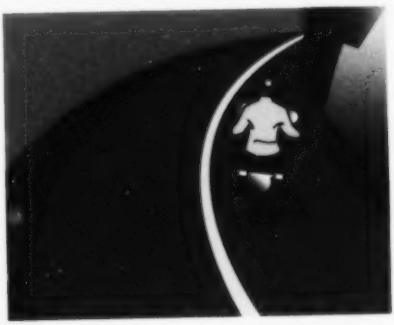
If a driver still follows you too closely, when the way is clear for a safe pass, slow down so the tailgater can pass.



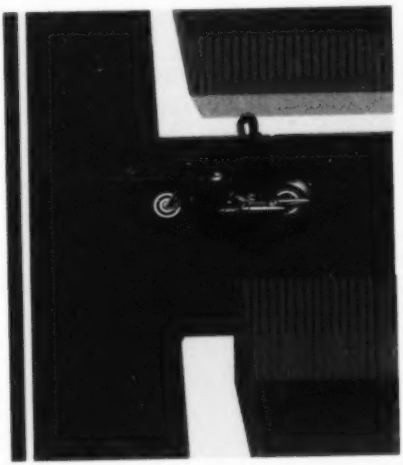
Position for seeing

As a motorcycle rider, you can put yourself in a position to see things that another driver cannot see.





Blind curves
You can move to one side of the lane or the other to get a better view through the curve. However, use extreme caution as you may encounter debris or gravel along the edge of the road.



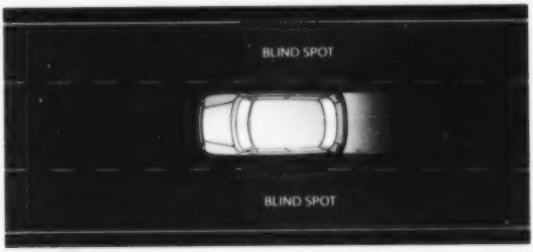
At blind intersections
After stopping, you should ease forward past obstructions to see if anyone is coming.

At the roadside
You can angle a motorcycle across the road so that you can see both directions.

7. Position for being seen

Where the rider positions the motorcycle on the road also affects how well other drivers can see it. Experienced riders think about what other drivers can see from where they are. These riders have learned to see themselves as others see them.

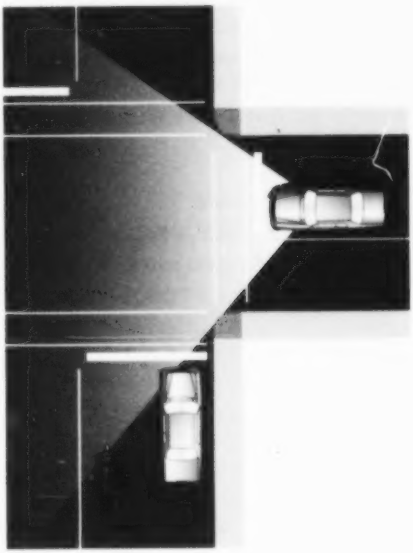
Don't ride in another driver's blind spot. Either pass the other driver or drop back. When you pass another vehicle, get through the blind spot as quickly as you can. Approach cautiously, but once you're alongside, get by quickly.



Look out for intersections

Most collisions between cars and motorcycles happen at intersections. Drivers often have a hard time seeing a motorcycle coming directly at them. A vehicle may make a left turn across the motorcycle's path or may pull out from a side street. These are two leading causes of motorcycle collisions at intersections. To cut down your chances of being hit:

1. Approach slowly. If a driver does pull out suddenly, your chances of making a quick stop or a quick turn are better.
2. Move as far away from the other vehicle as you can. Always drive in the lane position that will make you the most visible.
3. Move away from things that could block the other driver's view. When you approach an intersection where there's a car waiting to pull out, move toward the centre of the road so that you're in the other driver's line of sight.



8. Riding at night

Riding at night is even more dangerous than riding in the day. This is why Endorsement 6 (learner's) licensed riders are prohibited from riding at night. The majority of fatal crashes happen after dark.

One of the major problems for motorcyclists driving at night is alcohol abuse. Driving after drinking is a problem for motorcyclists, whether they have been drinking or they are trying to avoid being hit by impaired drivers.

Another major problem when driving at night is reduced visibility. You cannot see or be seen as well at night as you can in the day.

Other considerations

Keep your headlight clean

Dirty lights mean less light.

Use your high beam

Get all the light that you can. Use your high beam whenever you are not following or meeting another vehicle.

Wear reflective clothing

Remember to take warmer clothing if you're going to be out at night.

Reduce your speed

If there is something lying in the road ahead, you will not be able to see it until you are very close to it. If you are going too fast, you may not be able to avoid it. It is important to reduce your speed at night, particularly on roads that you don't know well.

Use the car ahead

If there is a car ahead, you can use it to your advantage. Its lights can give you a better view of the road ahead than your own light. Car taillights bouncing up and down can alert you to bumps or rough pavement.

Increase distance

Distance is more difficult to judge at night than in the day. You can make up for this by allowing extra distance. Follow at a greater distance from the vehicle ahead. Leave more room on either side of you when riding alongside other vehicles. Give yourself more distance to pass. (For more information, see the *Saskatchewan Driver's Handbook*.)

9. Handling dangerous surfaces

A motorcycle is balanced on only two wheels. To stay upright, the two wheels must have good traction. Any surface that affects the motorcycle's traction will affect its steering, braking and balance. Any slippery surface reduces your control and increases your chances of falling.

Slippery surfaces

Slippery surfaces can pose hazards to driving. Be cautious of:

- wet pavement, particularly just after it starts to rain and before oil washes to the side of the road
- leaves, sand and gravel on hard surfaces such as pavement, especially in spring before the sand has been cleaned from the streets
- mud, snow and ice
- worn, polished pavement, particularly when wet

There are a number of things you must do to operate safely on slippery surfaces:

Reduce speed

It takes longer to stop on slippery surfaces. You must make up for this by going slower, especially in curves. Remember, speed limits posted on curves apply to ideal surface conditions.

Avoid sudden moves

Any sudden change in speed or direction can cause a skid on slippery surfaces. Therefore, you should turn, brake, accelerate and change gears as little and as smoothly as possible.

Use both brakes

The front brake is still more effective than the rear brake, even on slippery surfaces.

Avoid the worst slippery areas

Try to find the best area of pavement and use it.

Oil from other vehicles tends to build up in the centre of the lane, particularly near intersections where vehicles slow down or stop. On wet pavement, therefore, it is better to operate in the track created by the wheels of moving vehicles. However, you should avoid driving through standing water.

Old, worn pavement is often polished smooth. When it is wet, it is very slippery. You can see these extra-slippery sections if you look for the shiny areas on the road.

Dirt and gravel tend to collect along the sides of the pavement. It is important to stay away from the edge of the road when you make sharp turns at intersections or enter and leave freeways.

Use extreme caution if you are riding in early spring before the street sweepers have removed the winter accumulation of sand.

Certain sections of the road dry out faster after a rain or snowfall. Try at all times to stay in the best part of the lane.

Gravel roads

Traction on gravel roads is not as good as on pavement. Some areas are better than others. Stay in the tire tracks away from the loose gravel at the edge of the road and avoid any sudden movements.

Grooves and gratings

When you ride over a badly rutted surface or a metal bridge grating, the motorcycle will tend to wander back and forth. While this may give you an uneasy feeling, it is not generally dangerous. Therefore, the best thing to do is stay on course, grip the controls firmly and ride straight across.

Ice or wet wooden surfaces

It is almost impossible to maintain balance on ice or wet wooden surfaces. Avoid these surfaces if at all possible. If you can't avoid one of these areas, slow down as much as possible before you get to it.

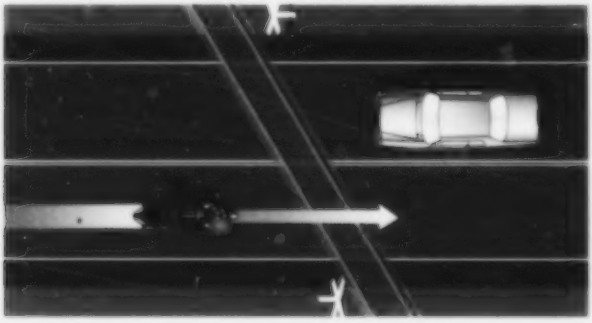
Uneven surfaces

Watch for uneven road surfaces such as bumps, broken pavement, potholes, railway tracks and construction areas. If the condition is bad enough, it could affect your control of the motorcycle. This is how to handle uneven surfaces:

1. Slow down to reduce the impact.
2. Keep your motorcycle as upright as possible and avoid turning.
3. Rise slightly on the footrests so that you can absorb the shock with your knees and elbows.

Railway tracks

Remember to check for trains before crossing any railway tracks. Slow down and cross at an angle between 45 to 90 degrees to prevent the wheels from getting caught in the tracks.



It is necessary to turn when you want to cross something that is running parallel to your course, such as railway or streetcar tracks, ruts in the middle of the road or a pavement seam. To cross something running parallel to you, move away far enough to be able to cross it at an angle. Then make a quick sharp turn. Do not try to edge across it. It could catch your tires and upset your balance.

10. Riding in bad weather

Rain

Riding in the rain presents several problems. The road is slippery, you cannot see or be seen as well, and your brakes may be less effective. If you're caught in the rain and don't have a rainsuit, you should get off the road if you have a long way to go to your destination.

When riding in the rain, you must slow down and ride very smoothly. Try to avoid shiny spots on the road. They are polished and slippery. A puddle could hide a large pothole and traction is worse in deeper water. Test your brakes periodically. A very light application of the brakes will dry them out if necessary.

You may also have difficulty seeing out of your helmet's visor and you may have to raise it slightly, just enough to allow some air to circulate behind it. If your motorcycle is equipped with a windscreen, you need to be able to see over it when seated during normal riding. You will not be able to see through the windscreen in heavy rain or fog. Some gloves designed for motorcyclists have a chamois surface on the back which you can use to wipe water off the face shield.

Do not ride during thunderstorms to avoid the risk of being struck by lightning.

Fog

Fog reduces your ability to see road conditions and other drivers, and to be seen yourself. An expert rider will watch for fog in low lying areas and by lakes or rivers close to the road. Fog may be present at sunrise, sunset or other times when the air temperature is rapidly changing. As in rain, you will have to wipe your face shield or raise it to be able to see out.

In really heavy fog you will be able to see only a few metres. Any time you cannot see farther than your stopping distance, you are riding blind. If there is something stopped on the road, you will hit it. If you slow down enough to be able to stop in heavy fog conditions, you may very well be hit from behind, so either way you lose. The only smart thing to do is find a safe place to stop and wait for conditions to improve.

Winter riding

In the section on perception and prediction (section 5), the importance of predicting what other drivers may do was emphasized. In winter or in cold weather, even if the road conditions are good, other drivers will not be expecting to see motorcyclists. Expert motorcyclists must be even more careful of what other drivers may do and should assume that other drivers have not seen them.

The motorcyclist must also anticipate sudden changes in the road surface. Icy or snow-covered patches may be found at:

- shady parts of the roadway
- bridges
- open, wind-swept areas
- side roads not completely cleared

If you find you are unable to avoid riding on a very slippery surface such as ice or snow, slow down as much as possible before you get to it. Pull the clutch, coast across and stay off the brakes. On a long section of snow-covered roadway, try to ride on loose or fresh snow. Hard-packed snow has less traction than loose snow.

The other danger of riding in winter is the cold. The cold will affect the performance of both rider and equipment. Here are some things to watch for:

- Cold weather lowers tire pressure, so check it regularly.
- Your face shield will have a greater tendency to fog.
- Wear sufficiently warm clothing.

11. Being in shape to ride your bike

Riding a motorcycle is more demanding than driving any other vehicle. You must be in good physical and mental shape to ride safely. Three things that often keep cyclists from being in shape to ride safely are alcohol, drugs and fatigue.

Alcohol

In Canada, it's a Criminal Code offence to drive your motorcycle while under the influence of alcohol. In far too many serious motorcycle crashes, drinking is a contributing factor.

When driving your motorcycle, you need your full concentration. Your driving is affected even after taking the first drink. Most affected is your judgment, balance, ability to handle steering, speed control, sign recognition and ability to watch for other vehicles and pedestrians.

Other drugs

Almost any drug can affect the skills you need to ride a motorcycle safely. This includes prescription drugs as well as illegal drugs. It even includes such everyday drugs as cold tablets or allergy pills. These drugs can leave you weak, dizzy or drowsy. Make sure you know the effects of any drug before attempting to ride. If you begin to feel dizzy or weak while you're riding, stop and wait until you feel better.

Fatigue

Fatigue impairs your ability to perceive and react to emergencies.

Here are some things you can do to prevent fatigue:

- Protect yourself from the elements. Wind, cold and rain make you tire quickly. Dress warmly. A fairing or windshield is worth its cost if you plan to do a lot of travelling.
- Limit your distance.
- Take frequent rest breaks. Stop and get off the bike.

If you ever feel that you don't want to ride your bike – then **don't**. If you're over-excited or depressed, leave the bike at home because that's the day you may be in a collision.

Remember, driving a bike takes your full concentration and attention!

12. Owning and maintaining a motorcycle

Accessories and modifications

A safe motorcycle can be quickly turned into a menace. If you add accessories incorrectly or change the motorcycle in any way, it may seriously degrade the motorcycle's handling. Here are a few things to avoid:

Highway pegs

These are pegs mounted on the front of the motorcycle to allow the rider to stretch their legs. The pegs may make the rider more comfortable.

The problem is:

- It takes too long to reach the foot brake in an emergency.
- Operators don't have the footing needed to maintain balance.

Sissy bars

This is a high bar or frame mounted on the back of the seat.

The problem is:

- When loaded, they change the motorcycle's centre of gravity and affect its balance.
- They make it harder for the operator and passenger to get off the motorcycle in a hurry.

Ape hangers

These are high handlebars that extend above the operator's shoulders.

The problem is:

- They reduce steering control.
- They block your vision.
- They are illegal.

Extended forks

These are much longer than standard forks and are installed by some riders for styling.

The problem is:

- They reduce steering precision.
- They increase stress on the frame and steering components.

Road race handlebars
Extra low, clamp-on type bars are sometimes used by riders.

The problem is:

- They may create discomfort and fatigue and make it harder to make good shoulder checks.

Touring modifications

Fairings, luggage attachments and containers may overload the bike, change its handling characteristics or cause a tire blowout.

13. Emergencies

No matter how good your perception and predictions are, there will be times when you find yourself in a tight spot. Your chances of getting out safely depend upon your ability to react quickly and precisely. Some riders panic and freeze, doing nothing at all. Expert riders have a number of ways to get out of emergencies, and they keep trying until they find one that works.

Quick stops

The front brake supplies about three-quarters of your braking power, so you must use both brakes to stop quickly. Apply both brakes with a progressive squeeze without locking the wheels. Pull in the clutch.

If the rear wheel does lock, do not release the brake until you've come to a complete stop.

Emergency steering

Even a quick stop may not be enough to keep you from hitting something in your path. A vehicle ahead might stop suddenly or pull out and partly block the lane. You may be able to steer around an obstacle quicker than you can stop. The only way to avoid a collision could be with a quick turn.

The key to making a quick turn is to get the motorcycle to lean quickly in the direction you wish to turn. The sharper the turn, the more the bike must lean (see page 15).

Stay in your own lane in an emergency. The moment you change lanes, you risk being hit by another vehicle. You should be able to squeeze by most obstacles

without leaving your lane. This is one time when the size of the motorcycle is in your favour. To avoid being hit, you can go into spaces too small for a car.

Going into a turn too fast

A major cause of serious motorcycle collisions is running off the road in a turn or a curve. One of two things seems to happen:

1. The rider badly misjudges a safe speed and goes into the turn much too fast, slides off the road and crashes into something.

2. Inexperienced riders think they can't turn sharply enough to make a turn, then brake too hard, lock the wheel, slide off the road and crash.

Inexperienced riders sometimes crash at speeds at which a more experienced rider could handle and make the turn.

Until you learn the cornering limits of your motorcycle, be especially careful to slow down enough for turns. If possible, do all your braking before you get into your turn.

When making a turn, you might find that you can't make it at the speed and lean angle you started with. Don't panic. You can probably lean the bike over more and turn tighter. The key to tightening up a turn safely is to do it smoothly and gently.

Riding over objects

Sometimes you have no choice but to ride over an object in your path. A length of tailpipe may be too close to steer around. Handling objects is a lot like riding over uneven surfaces.

Here is what to do:

1. Hold the handlegrips tightly so that you don't lose your grip when the front wheel hits.

2. Keep a straight course. This keeps the motorcycle upright and reduces the chance of falling on impact.

3. Rise slightly on the footrests. This allows your legs and arms to absorb the shock and helps keep you from being bounced off as the rear wheel hits.

4. Do not brake while going over the object.

Following these four steps lets you ride safely over most obstacles found on the highway. It's a good idea to stop and check your tires and rims for damage after riding over an object.

Flying objects

From time to time you may be struck by insects, cigarette butts thrown from windows or stones kicked up by the tires of the vehicle ahead. If you do not have face protection, you could be struck in the eye or the face. If you are wearing face protection, it could become smeared or cracked, making it difficult to see. Whatever happens, **don't let it affect your control of the motorcycle**. Keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the handlebars. As soon as it's safe, pull off the road and repair the damage.

Animals

Naturally, you should do everything you can to avoid hitting an animal. However, if you are in traffic, don't swerve out of your lane to avoid hitting a small animal. You have a better chance of surviving an impact with a small animal than a collision with another vehicle.

Motorcycles are often chased by dogs. To avoid this, slow down a bit and down shift as you approach the animal. As you reach it, speed up. You will leave the dog behind so quickly that it will usually lose interest. If you find yourself being chased, don't kick at the animal. It's too easy to lose control of the motorcycle.

Mechanical problems

Things that go wrong with the motorcycle itself can also cause emergencies. Three critical emergencies are a tire blowout, stuck throttle and wobble.

Tire blowouts

If you have a tire blowout, you will need to react quickly to keep your balance.

You cannot always hear a tire blow. You have to be able to detect a flat tire from the way the motorcycle reacts. If the front tire goes flat, the steering will feel "heavy." If the rear tire goes flat, the back of the motorcycle will tend to slide from side to side.

Here is what to do if you have a blowout while riding:

1. Hold the handlegrips tightly and concentrate on steering. Try to maintain a straight course.

2. Stay off the brake. Gradually close the throttle and let the motorcycle coast.

3. If it is the front tire that has blown, shift your weight as far back as you can. If it is the rear tire, stay where you are.

4. Wait until the motorcycle is going very slowly, then edge toward the side of the road and stop.

Stuck throttle

When you try to close the throttle, you might find that it won't turn or the engine won't slow down. If there's traffic ahead or you're making a turn, you must react quickly to prevent a collision.

Here's what to do if you have a stuck throttle while riding:

1. Turn off the engine with the kill switch and pull in the clutch.

2. If the motorcycle does not have a kill switch:
   a) you may be able to leave the clutch out and stop the engine with the brakes; or

   b) you could pull in the clutch and let the engine race until you can stop and turn it off with the key. This method could result in damage to the engine.

3. Park the bike until you can get it fixed.

Wobble

Sometimes when going at a fairly high speed, the front wheel can suddenly begin to wobble (shake from side to side). Some things that can cause a wobble include:

- a windshield or fairing that is improperly mounted or not designed for the motorcycle
- loose steering-head bearings
- worn steering parts
- a wheel that is bent or out of alignment
- loose wheel bearings
- loose spokes
- improper tread design
- road surface

Excessive speed will increase the likelihood and severity of these problems.

The only thing you can do in a wobble is to ride it out:

1. Firmly grip the handlebars and put your weight forward. Don't try to fight the wobble.
2. Gradually close the throttle and let the motorcycle slow down. Don't apply the brakes; it could make the wobble worse. Never accelerate.

Pull off the road as soon as you can. If you are carrying a heavy load, distribute it more evenly. If you are at a gas station or have a tire gauge, check your tire inflation.

Chain breakage

Chain failure usually is caused by a worn or stretched chain that doesn't fit the sprockets properly, or by worn sprockets. When the chain breaks, you'll notice it because you'll instantly lose power to the rear wheel and the engine will speed up. If the chain locks the rear wheel, you won't be able to disengage it and it could cause your cycle to skid.

Engine seizure

Engine seizure means that the engine locks or freezes, and it has the same result as a locked rear wheel. However, there is usually some advance warning, giving you time to respond.

Engine seizure is caused by overheating or lack of lubrication. Without oil, the engine's moving parts will no longer move smoothly against each other, and the engine will overheat. The first symptom may be a loss of engine power. You may also notice a change in the engine's sound.

If your engine starts to seize, squeeze the clutch lever, disengaging the engine from the rear wheel. Pull off the road to the shoulder and stop. Let the engine cool. While you may be able to add oil and restart the engine, it should be thoroughly checked for damage.

Getting off the road

If you have to leave the roadway to check the motorcycle or to rest for a while, here are two important things to do:

1. **Check the roadside**
   Make sure the surface of the roadside is firm enough to ride on. If it is soft grass, loose sand or if you are not sure about it, slow down before you turn onto it. Since drivers behind might not expect you to slow down, make sure you check your mirror, give a clear signal and shoulder check before moving.

2. **Pull well off the road**
   Get as far off the road as you can. A motorcycle by the side of the road can be very hard to spot. You don't want someone else pulling off at the same place.

14. Group riding

The highway is not a place to socialize. Motorcyclists riding in groups do not have any special rights. If you want to ride with others, you must do it in a way that does not endanger anyone or interfere with the flow of traffic.

Keep the group small

A large group interferes with traffic, making it necessary for cars to pass a long line of motorcycles. Also, a large group tends to be separated easily by traffic or red lights. Those who are left behind often do unsafe things in an effort to catch up. If your group is larger than four or five riders, divide it into two or more smaller groups.

Keep the group together

Another way to prevent "catch-up" is to keep the group together. There are several ways of doing this.

Plan ahead

If you are the leader, look ahead for changes. Give signals early so "the word gets back" in plenty of time. Start lane changes early enough to allow everyone to complete the change. The leader should use hand signals where possible, in addition to electronic signals.

Put beginners up front

Place inexperienced riders behind the leader, where they can be watched by more experienced riders.

Check the rider behind you

Agree on a pre-set pace. Use your mirror to keep an eye on the person behind you. If he or she falls behind, slow down. If everyone does this, the group will stay with the tailender.

Know the route

Make sure everybody knows the route. Then if someone is separated for a moment, he or she won't have to hurry for fear of taking a wrong turn.

Keep your distance

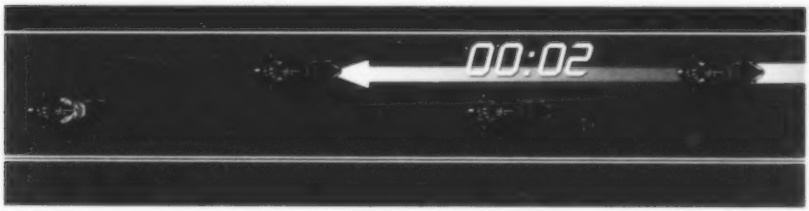
It is important to keep close ranks and a safe distance. A close group takes up less space on the highway, is easier to see and is less likely to be separated by traffic lights. Driving in a close group, however, must be done properly.

Don't pair up

Although motorcycles are permitted to ride two abreast in a traffic lane, it is not recommended practice to operate directly alongside another motorcycle. If you have to avoid another vehicle or something in the road, you will have no place to go. If you have to speak to another rider, wait until you both have stopped.

Staggered formation

The best way to keep close ranks and yet maintain an adequate distance is through a staggered formation. The leader rides to the left side of the lane while the second rider stays a little behind and rides to the right side of the lane. A third rider would take the left position **a two-second distance** behind the first rider. The fourth rider would be **a two-second distance** behind the second rider. This formation allows the group to be more compact, allowing traffic to pass. On multi-lane roads, a following distance of three seconds or more is recommended.



Staggered formation can be safely used on an open highway. However, a single file should be resumed on curves, during turns or when entering or leaving a highway.

When riders in a staggered formation want to pass another vehicle, they should do it one at a time. When it is safe to do so, the lead rider should pull out and pass. When the leader returns to the lane, he or she should take the left lane position and keep going to open a gap for the next rider.

As soon as the first rider is safely by, the second rider should move to the left position and watch for a safe chance to pass. After passing, this rider should return to the right lane position and open up a gap for the next rider.

When group riding with multiple lanes, always maintain a staggered position with the lead bike in the left front corner of the lane.

When passing another vehicle, always pass on the left.

15. Carrying passengers and cargo

If you are an Endorsement 6 licence holder, it is illegal for you to carry passengers. Even with an "M" endorsement, you should avoid carrying passengers or large loads until you are an experienced rider. The extra weight changes the way the motorcycle handles – the way it balances, turns, speeds up and slows down.

When you do start to carry a passenger, carry someone who is light before carrying a heavy person.

Here are some guidelines to follow in carrying passengers and cargo:

Passengers

In order to carry a passenger safely, you must do the following:

- Make certain your motorcycle is equipped to carry passengers. (The passenger must not ride in front of the driver.)
- Instruct your passenger before you start out. (see page 53)
- Adjust to the passenger's weight.

To carry passengers, your motorcycle must have:

A proper seat

The seat should be large enough to hold both you and your passenger without crowding. You should not have to move any closer to the front of the motorcycle than you usually do. A passenger should not hang over the end of the seat.

Footrests

There must be footrests for your passenger. Without a firm footing your passenger can fall off and pull you off, too.

Protective equipment

A passenger must wear a legal helmet and should have the same type of protective equipment and clothing worn by the driver.

You should also adjust the mirrors and headlight to the change in the motorcycle's angle. Have the passenger sit on the seat while you make the adjustments. If you carry a passenger, it is a good idea to add pressure to the tires (check your owner's manual). If the shock absorbers are adjustable, they should also be adjusted to carry the added weight.

Riding with passengers

When you are carrying a passenger, the motorcycle responds more slowly. It takes longer to speed up, slow down or make a turn. The heavier the passenger or the heavier the bike, the longer all of these things take. To adjust for added weight of the passenger, you should:

- operate at a somewhat lower speed, particularly on corners, curves or bumps
- begin to slow down earlier than usual when you approach a stop
- allow a greater following distance and keep more distance between you and other vehicles to either side
- look for larger gaps whenever you cross, enter or merge with traffic

Warn your passenger when you are about to start moving, stop quickly, turn sharply or ride over a bump. Otherwise, talk as little as possible.

Instructing passengers

Don't assume the passenger knows what to do, even if he or she is a motorcycle rider. Provide complete instructions before you start.

A passenger should be told to:

- Notify the operator when you are ready to mount or dismount and wait for approval. This prevents surprise shifts of balance.
- Hold the operator's waist or hips. This braces the passenger for acceleration or braking. Keep both feet on the footrests at all times.
- Keep hands and feet away from moving and hot parts.
- Look over the rider's shoulder in the direction of the turn.
- Avoid sudden moves that might affect stability.
- If the rider rises off the seat, so too should the passenger.
- Enjoy the ride!

Carrying loads

A motorcycle is not really designed to carry cargo. However, a small load can be carried safely if it is properly positioned and fastened.

Keep the load low

Secure loads to the seat or put them in saddlebags. Do not pile loads against a sissy bar or frame on the back of the seat. This will change the centre of gravity and disturb the balance of the motorcycle.

Keep the load forward

Place the load over or forward of the rear axle. Anything mounted behind the rear wheel can affect how the motorcycle turns and brakes. It can also cause a wobble.

Distribute the load evenly

If you have saddlebags, make certain the load in each one is about the same. An uneven load can cause the motorcycle to pull to one side.

Secure the load

Fasten the load securely with elastic cords or ropes. A loose load can catch in the wheel or chain. If this happens, the rear wheel may lock up and make the motorcycle skid.

Check the load

Check the load regularly when you are stopped. Make sure it has not worked loose or moved.

16. Maintenance

Read your owner's manual and save it for future reference, should something go wrong with your motorcycle.

There is only one way to spot problems before they cause trouble. Inspect the motorcycle carefully and fix things right away. Earlier in this manual, we described checks that should be made each time you ride. Here are some things to check once each week:

Tires

Check the tread to make sure it is deep enough. You should have no less than 1.5 mm of tread depth left in any groove. If the tread is getting low, buy new tires. Inadequate tread depth will greatly reduce your braking traction on wet roads. If the wear is uneven, have the wheels balanced and the alignment checked. Make sure the air pressure is correct, as many blowouts are due to low air pressure.

Also check for cuts, scrapes, exposed cord, abnormal bumps or bulges, or any other visible tread or sidewall defect.

Wheels

Check both wheels for missing or loose spokes. Check the rims for cracks or dents. Lift the wheel off the ground and spin it. Watch its motion and listen for noise. Also move it from side to side to check for looseness.

Controls

Check the controls for smooth operation. Check the cables for kinks or broken strands. Lubricate the control mechanisms at the each end of the cable.

Chain and sprockets

Oil the chain and check for wear. Your owner's manual will describe when and how to tighten a chain.

Shock absorbers

Does your motorcycle bounce several times after it crosses a bump? Do you hear a clunk? If so, your shock absorbers may need to be adjusted or replaced.

Fastenings

Check for loose or missing nuts, bolts or cotter pins. Normal vibration loosens parts. If you keep the motorcycle clean, it is easier to spot missing parts.

Brakes

If you hear a scraping sound when you try to stop, or if the brakes feel spongy, have them serviced immediately.

Fluid levels

If your motorcycle has hydraulic brakes, check regularly that the fluid level is high enough.

Drive line

Chain breakage is very dangerous. Maintain the chain and replace it when necessary. Check for slack and lubrication.

Drive shaft

Check the fluid levels.

Muffler

Modifying an exhaust system will create an excessively noisy vehicle that can be very annoying to the public. A motorcycle driver with an altered muffler may be guilty of an offence.

17. Driver's licence information

You must not operate a motorcycle on any street or highway unless you hold a licence/endorsement authorizing the operation of a motorcycle.

You must pass a written test on motorcycle traffic laws and safe driving practices plus a vision screening to obtain a "6" endorsement (learner's) on a Saskatchewan driver's licence.

In preparing to become a licensed motorcycle driver, you are encouraged to attend a motorcycle training course.

Endorsement 6

A "6" endorsement on a Class 1 - 7 licence is an authority for the operation of a motorcycle for learning purposes only. Holders are subject to the following restrictions:

- They may not operate a motorcycle from half an hour after sunset until half an hour before sunrise.
- They may not carry passengers.
- They must operate within a 100 km radius of the address or secondary address shown on the certificate of registration for the motorcycle.

To obtain a "6" (learner's) endorsement on a Saskatchewan driver's licence you must:

- be at least 16 years old
- pass the three knowledge tests – sign identification
  – motorcycle driving situations
  – rules of the road
- meet minimum medical and vision standards

Endorsement M

An "M" endorsement on a Class 1 - 5 or 7 Saskatchewan driver's licence is an unrestricted motorcycle driver's licence.

To add an "M" endorsement, you must:

- be at least 16 years old
- have held a Class 7 licence for at least nine months
- hold a valid Saskatchewan driver's licence with Endorsement 6
- successfully complete an in-traffic road test

Driver's licence restrictions

The following restrictions will be placed on your driving authority if the road test is taken on a motorcycle under 50 cc's or a three-wheeled motorcycle:

1. Restriction J – motorcycles under 50 cc's only in Endorsement M
   – larger motorcycles as a learner only

2. Restriction H – operation of three-wheeled motorcycles only in Endorsement M
   – operation of two-wheeled motorcycles as a learner only

Becoming a driver

Once you feel confident about taking the driver examination, contact your nearest SGI motor licence issuer to arrange an appointment in your area. Be sure to obtain a receipt for each written or road test from any licence issuer before the test is booked. Appointments can be made by phoning toll-free 1-800-667-5111 for southern Saskatchewan and 1-800-667-5105 for northern Saskatchewan. If you are booking your test in Regina or Saskatoon, call 775-6174 in Regina and 683-2320 in Saskatoon; do not call the toll-free numbers. If you do not cancel your appointment and you do not show up for an exam, there can be a four-week waiting period until the next appointment.

You are required to show proof of age by a birth certificate, passport or any document acceptable to SGI. Be sure to take several pieces of **original identification** with you. Photocopies of these documents are **not** acceptable. If your name has changed due to marriage or other reasons, please bring documentation that supports the name change.

Graduated Driver's Licensing

Graduated Driver's Licensing (GDL) is designed to assist new drivers in gaining valuable experience as they work towards becoming fully qualified drivers.

The program is a staged introduction of new drivers into the driving environment. Drivers gradually move into higher-risk driving situations after gaining experience in lower-risk situations.

There are three stages to Saskatchewan's GDL – Learner, Novice 1 and Novice 2. As drivers pass through the stages, they see fewer restrictions at each stage until they graduate to an experienced Class 5 driver's licence. If a new driver displays good driving experience with no incidents or interruptions, they will graduate to a Class 5 licence in 18 months. Any incidents or interruptions delay graduation to an experienced licence.

For more information please refer to the GDL brochure or visit SGI's website at www.sgi.sk.ca.

Knowledge tests

The knowledge tests include:

- sign identification
- motorcycle driving situations
- rules of the road

If you fail part of this test, you will be required to rewrite the examination(s) you failed. **You may only write once per day.**

Vision test

The vision test may include:

- a visual acuity test
- a field of vision test
- distance judgment

There are certain minimum standards which you must meet.

If you fail to meet these standards, you may be referred to an ophthalmologist or optometrist for further testing and possible prescription of glasses or lenses. If you can pass the eye test only when you are wearing your glasses or lenses, then you will be issued a restricted licence. Your driver's licence will be valid only when you are wearing corrective eyewear.

Road test

You must obtain and produce a receipt for each road test before the test is booked. Photocopies of receipts are not acceptable.

You are required to take the road test on an appropriate motorcycle. You must supply the motorcycle.

The road test is an evaluation of your ability to operate a motorcycle. You will be tested on:

- starting
- stopping
- turning
- traffic signs and signals
- passing vehicles and lane driving
- travelling through controlled and uncontrolled intersections
- proper lane positioning
- anticipation of hazardous conditions in the making
- other safe driving practices such as speed selection and steering techniques

A road test will be refused if:

- you are late for your appointment
- you do not have the appropriate driver's licence or have not paid the exam fee
- the motorcycle is unsafe or not equipped in accordance with legislation
- you do not meet the vision or medical fitness requirements
- you do not have appropriate helmet/eye protection

At the end of the road test, you will receive a complete report and any errors will be explained to you. If you fail your test, the report will indicate where improvement is required. When you have had more practice, you may make an appointment for another road test. You must pay an additional fee and present a new valid receipt to the driver examiner before each road test.

You will fail the road test if you:

- exceed the speed limit
- are involved in a collision for which you are more than 50 per cent responsible
- fail to stop where required
- use your feet improperly or excessively
- fail to yield to vehicles and pedestrians
- fail to wear eye protection properly
- fail to follow a request of the examiner
- require the assistance of the examiner
- have various combinations of minor mistakes
- drop the motorcycle

Registering your motorcycle

All motorcycles operated on a public highway (roadway) must be registered. The certificate of registration should be carried with the operator and must be produced when requested by a police officer.

Documents required

a) New vehicle: A bill of sale and a New Vehicle Information Statement (new vehicles only) or manufacturer's Statement of Origin are required to register the vehicle. A Motorcycle Inspection Certificate may be required (see point d).

b) Transfer from another province: Current out-of-province registration is acceptable as proof of ownership provided that the same name also appears on the Saskatchewan application.

c) Imported motorcycle: A K22 Customs Clearance Card must be presented.

d) Motorcycle Inspection Form: All motorcycles with the engine capacity of 474 cc or greater must have the serial numbers inspected prior to registering, except when the application for registration is accompanied by a New Vehicle Information Statement. To make an appointment for an inspection, please contact your nearest municipal police force or SGI claims centre.

e) Proof of identity: A birth certificate or baptismal certificate with a second identification document must be presented when an applicant has not previously been issued a Personal Identification Code number. Only original documents (not photocopies) are acceptable.

Where to go

You can register your motorcycle at any SGI motor licence issuer. You may select a vehicle registration term of 89 days to 365 days.

New residents

Motorcycles are required to be registered with Saskatchewan plates within 90 days of establishment of residency.

Insurance

Compulsory minimum insurance coverage is included with registration of motorcycles.

Basic insurance rates vary according to the year and engine capacity of the motorcycle.

Additional coverage in the form of an extension policy may be obtained from any insurance company.

A certificate of registration is proof of financial responsibility. This document is the motor vehicle liability insurance card and must be presented as proof of financial responsibility when requested.

Cancellation

The licence plates and vehicle registration can be returned to any motor licence issuer or to SGI at 2260 – 11th Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 2N7 with a request for cancellation.

Renewal information

A renewal application will be mailed to you approximately one month before your registration term expires. Renewal applications are forwarded to the address indicated on the registration certificate. If these renewals are not received by two weeks before your expiry date, proceed to any motor licence issuer office and complete an amended renewal application.

Provincial Sales Tax (PST)

The PST must be collected on all vehicles registered for the first time in Saskatchewan. Some motorcycles may be tax exempt.

For more information, contact the Ministry of Finance at 306-787-6768.

Motorcycle equipment standards

A properly equipped motorcycle must have:

- a proper muffler
- a minimum of 1,040 mm wheel base and ground clearance at the lowest part of the power train case that is between 100 and 320 mm
- two brake systems: one effective on the front wheel, one effective on the rear wheel, each with a separate means of application that can stop a motorcycle going 30 km/h in eight metres
- handlegrips that do not exceed the shoulder height of the seated operator
- a saddle that is at least 650 mm above the ground when unladen
- handlebars that are joined to the frame at a point at least 650 mm above the ground
- a horn
- a speedometer
- lamps which are securely mounted, including:
  - at least one headlamp located at the front emitting a white light both high beam and low beam; if 1974 or newer, must be activated by engaging any forward gear with the motor operating
  - at least one tail lamp located at the rear emitting a red light
  - a means of illuminating the licence plate
  - a rear facing brake lamp that emits a red light when activated by application of either brake
  - four turn signal lamps – two facing the front that emit an amber light and two facing the rear that emit either an amber or red light
- tires that are fully protected by fenders or mudflaps
- a mirror that provides the operator a clear view to the rear

In addition:

- Every operator and every passenger must wear a securely attached helmet that meets the standards of either the Canadian Standards Association, the American Motorcycle Association, the British Standards Institute, the Snell Memorial Foundation or the U.S. Department of Transport and be so labelled.
- No passenger shall be carried unless there is a passenger seat or the operator's seat has been designed to accommodate a passenger, and there are foot pegs attached.

18. Electric cycles and scooters

Electric assist bicycle

Electric assist bicycle means any two- or three-wheeled bicycle that:

- is equipped with an electric assist motor that is no larger than 500 watts
- is designed to be propelled with the combination of muscular power and power assist from the electric motor
- cannot be operated at a speed of greater than 32 km/h (20 mph) on any level service

Driver's licence required: No

Age restriction: None

Registration required: No (special bicycle sticker may be required by city)

Helmets: Operator requires a bicycle or motorcycle helmet

Operation rules: Must be driven in accordance with the rules of the road under The Traffic Safety Act normally applicable to a bicycle and cannot be operated in any area restricted by municipal bylaw

Power cycle

A power cycle is a two- or three-wheeled bicycle that:

- is designed to be propelled primarily with the power from an electric motor but does have functioning pedals
- has an electric motor of no more than 500 watts
- cannot be operated at a speed of greater than 32 km/h (20 mph) on any level service
- meets the definition of a "power-assisted bicycle" in the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations

Driver's licence required:	Yes, a valid Class 7 driver's licence or higher
Age restriction:	As per driver's licence
Registration required:	No (special bicycle sticker may be required by city)
Helmets:	Operator requires a bicycle or motorcycle helmet
Operation rules:	Must be driven in accordance with the rules of the road under The Traffic Safety Act normally applicable to a bicycle and cannot be operated in any area restricted by municipal bylaw

Any gas-powered cycles, electric cycles larger than 500 watts or without pedals are considered motorcycles and all motorcycle licensing requirements apply.

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